

IN THE CLAIMS:

1. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) An automated freezer comprising:
a removable cartridge for storing at least one item; and
a platform moveable within said removable cartridge in response to a request for said at least one item; and
a retention mechanism to retain a portion of said at least one item in the automated freezer when said cartridge is removed from the automated freezer.
2. (CANCELED)
3. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) The automated freezer as recited in claim 2—1 further including a buffer defining an inner passage, said buffer having a lower end and said retention mechanism, wherein said cartridge further includes an upper end, and said upper end of said cartridge is received in said lower end of said buffer.
4. (PREVIOUSLY PRESENTED) The automated freezer as recited in claim 1 further including a removal device and an exit opening, wherein said removal device removes said at least one item from the automated freezer through said exit opening in response to said request.
5. (PREVIOUSLY PRESENTED) The automated freezer as recited in claim 4 wherein said platform raises after said at least one item exits said automated freezer through said exit opening.
6. (PREVIOUSLY PRESENTED) The automated freezer as recited in claim 4 further including a sensor, wherein said removal device removes said at least one item from said automated freezer through said exit opening in response to said request when said sensor detects said at least one item.
7. (ORIGINAL) The automated freezer as recited in claim 4 wherein said removal device is pivotal.

8. (PREVIOUSLY PRESENTED) The automated freezer as recited in claim 1 further including a controller associated with the automated freezer and a POS device, wherein said request comprises a signal sent by said POS device.
9. (ORIGINAL) The automated freezer as recited in claim 1 wherein said cartridge has a substantially circular inner profile.
10. (PREVIOUSLY PRESENTED) The automated freezer as recited in claim 1 wherein said cartridge includes a first portion and a second portion, and said first portion is removably attached to said second portion by an attachment feature, and said first portion includes a first bottom end having a first half-circular cutout and said second portion includes a second bottom end having a second half-circular cutout, said first half-circular cutout and said second half-circular cutout define a circular cutout when said first portion is attached to said second position.
11. (ORIGINAL) The automated freezer as recited in claim 10 wherein said platform has a platform diameter and said circular cutout has a cutout diameter, and said cutout diameter is greater than said platform diameter.
12. (PREVIOUSLY PRESENTED) The automated freezer as recited in claim 10 wherein said cartridge includes a bottom edge having an opening with an opening dimension, and said platform includes a platform diameter, and said opening dimension is greater than said platform diameter.
13. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) The automated freezer as recited in claim ~~2~~3 wherein said retention mechanism comprises a plurality of arms moveable between a first position and a second position, and said plurality of arms enter said inner passage when in said first position and said plurality of arms do not enter said inner passage when in said second position.
14. (ORIGINAL) The automated freezer as recited in claim 13 further including a resilient member that biases said plurality of arms into said first position.

15. (PREVIOUSLY PRESENTED) The automated freezer as recited in claim 13 wherein said plurality of arms comprise four arms.

16. (ORIGINAL) The automated freezer as recited in claim 13 wherein said first position is substantially perpendicular to said second position.

17. (ORIGINAL) The automated freezer as recited in claim 13 wherein said at least one item biases said plurality of arms into said second position.

18. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) A method for removing at least one item from an automated freezer, the method comprising the steps of:

loading the at least one item into a cartridge;

loading the cartridge in the automated freezer;

sending a request to the automated freezer; and

automatically removing the at least one item from the automated freezer in response to ~~said the request;~~

removing the cartridge from the automated freezer; and

retaining a portion of the at least one item in the automated freezer after the step of removing the cartridge.

19. (PREVIOUSLY PRESENTED) The automated freezer as recited in claim 1 wherein said at least one item is transferred from the automated freezer to a grill for cooking said at least one item.

20. (PREVIOUSLY PRESENTED) The automated freezer as recited in claim 1 further including a sensor that detects when said cartridge is empty and a visual indicator that indicates when said sensor detects that said cartridge is empty.

21. (NEW) The automated freezer as recited in claim 1 wherein said at least one item is a hamburger.

22. (NEW) The automated freezer as recited in claim 1 wherein said at least one item is automatically transferred from the automated freezer to a grill for cooking said at least one item in response to the request.

23. (NEW) The automated freezer as recited in claim 1 wherein the automated freezer freezes said at least one item.